

## OPENING STATEMENT

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Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Science

Hearing: "*NASA's Fiscal Year 2007 Budget Proposal*"

February 16, 2006

Good morning. I want to join Chairman Boehlert in welcoming Administrator Griffin and Deputy Administrator Dale to this morning's hearing.

Dr. Griffin has always been forthright in his testimony to this Committee, and I am confident that we will get straight answers from him again today. He demonstrated that attribute again in his recent statement to NASA employees on the issue of scientific integrity.

It is now a little more than two years since President Bush announced his exploration initiative. I think it is appropriate for this Committee to step back and see how the implementation of the President's Vision squares with what Congress was led to believe by the White House and NASA two years ago.

As you will recall, when the exploration initiative was rolled out, the Administration said that the President's Vision for Space Exploration would be both "affordable" and "sustainable." In support of those assertions, the Administration presented a multiyear budget plan that demonstrated its commitment to providing the resources needed to:

- carry out the President's exploration initiative,
- fund the Space Shuttle and Space Station programs and,
- ensure that NASA's space and Earth science programs would grow at a healthy annual rate.

That was what the Administration *said* would happen. How does that compare with what actually *did* happen?

Well, the simple fact is that in the two years since the exploration initiative was announced, the Administration has never sent a budget request to Congress equal to what it said NASA would need to carry out the exploration initiative and NASA's other programs.

Specifically, the budget plan of two years ago that accompanied the exploration initiative said that NASA would need \$17 billion in Fiscal Year 2006. Yet the Administration wound up sending over a request that was more than half a billion dollars lower than that level. Unfortunately, that wasn't an aberration.

Its budget plan of two years ago also said that NASA would need \$17.815 billion in Fiscal Year 2007.

Yet the Administration has just sent over a budget request for NASA that is more than *a billion dollars less* than that amount.

Supporters of the President's initiative are fond of saying that it is a long-term undertaking, and that the challenge will be to ensure that future Administrations and Congresses sustain the exploration initiative. I disagree - I think the real challenge is in getting the Administration that *proposed* this initiative to adequately fund the agency tasked with carrying it out.

Why should we expect future Administrations to sustain a commitment to the exploration initiative when the Bush Administration has not seen fit to provide the resources that the Administration itself said NASA would need?

Of course, it will be argued that we are at war, and that we have a deficit to get under control, and so we shouldn't expect NASA to receive all of the money that was promised. That argument has merit. However, it ignores the fact that the war and the deficit were *already* uncomfortable realities when the President's initiative was announced.

There will also be those who argue that NASA did better than many other agencies in the competition for funds this year. It's an interesting observation, but largely irrelevant.

The issue is not whether NASA got a higher percentage increase than some other agencies. Rather, the issue is whether NASA got the funding it needs to carry out its programs successfully. That is why I and other Members were concerned two years about the likely impact of trying to shoehorn a big, new Moon-Mars initiative into a NASA budget that was going to be under increasing pressure in the coming years for a variety of reasons.

We were assured that we didn't need to worry - that the budget plan was "credible", that NASA could undertake the advertised science program, invest in a range of new technologies, and do all of the other things described in the budget plan that accompanied the exploration initiative.

Again, what is the reality two years later? Well, last year, the budgetary runout for NASA's space and Earth science activities was cut by one billion dollars. This year, the President's FY 07 budget request for NASA would cut an additional \$3.1 billion dollars from the space and Earth science runout relative to last year's plan. And NASA's life sciences and microgravity sciences research programs have been all but eliminated.

The runout for investment in new exploration-related research and technologies has been cut by a total of more than \$4.6 billion relative to last year's plan. And the runout for investment in human systems research and technologies has been cut by more than \$1.9 billion relative to last year's plan.

The budgetary runout for aeronautics bears little resemblance to the budget plan that accompanied the FY 2005 budget request, with the funding proposal for aeronautics in FY 07 alone more than \$200 million lower than what had been planned. And according to OMB, NASA has cut its funding for applied research overall by 36 percent compared to FY 06.

Unfortunately, the situation is even worse than simply an unwillingness of the Administration to provide the needed resources. It turns out that the budget plans sent to Congress by the White House to demonstrate the affordability of the Vision understated the outyear funding requirements of the Space Shuttle and Space Station programs by billions of dollars. And now Dr. Griffin has been left to deal with that shortfall.

We are being assured that we only have a "temporary" problem - that once the Shuttle is retired, everything will work out. We'll see - but I think we have to be guided by the hard data at hand - and the record of the past two years demonstrates that many of the assumptions underlying Congress's support for the President's initiative have not been borne out.

That doesn't provide much ground for optimism as we look ahead. I don't fault Dr. Griffin. I believe he has done his best to make responsible decisions. I can agree or disagree with those decisions, but I respect his willingness to try to make the best of the situation the agency finds itself in.

Nevertheless, the reality is that the glowing Vision that Congress was given two years ago bears little resemblance to the situation at hand. As I have said in the past, I support exploration - as long as it is paid for, and as long as it isn't paid for by unwisely cutting the other important missions of NASA. It is becoming painfully obvious to me that "we aren't going to get there from here" if we continue on the present course.

While I have not yet decided on my final position, I think we have a number of alternatives to consider:

- Either increase NASA's overall funding along the lines of the Authorization Act of 2005,
- Slow or stop all or part of the exploration initiative until the nation is prepared to provide the necessary resources or,
- Step back and consider whether there are meaningful alternatives to the President's exploration initiative that might be more appropriate given our overall goals for NASA and the resource constraints we are likely to face.

None of these options will be easy, and I don't claim to have the answer at this point. However, I want to make it clear that I don't want to see Congress signing up for another big, under-funded hardware program that winds up costing more, doing less, and cannibalizing other important NASA missions. We have been down that road too many times in the past, and I've got no desire to do so again.

With that, I again want to welcome Administrator Griffin and Deputy Administrator Dale, and I look forward to your testimony.